

Amateurs Showcase: treats to come at King's Theatre



If you enjoy musicals, operetta or just great singing, make sure you snap up your tickets for some fantastic new productions coming to The King's Theatre. At a thoroughly enjoyable preview last week, an enthusiastic audience was given a taste of four shows, all of them well worth seeing.

In his introduction to the evening, the theatre's CEO Duncan Hendry said "These fabulous local companies are at the heart of what we do at Festival and King's'" – so much so that the first thing Mr Hendry did on taking up his post was to meet with all of them to find out what he could do for them. Compere Alan Borthwick joined Edinburgh Gilbert & Sullivan Society fifty years ago, and is 'the only (barely) living person who's directed all four of the groups here tonight' – and he alleges he's enjoyed every minute of it.



Photo by Phil Wilkinson



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First on stage was The Bohemians Lyric Company with their new production of *Sister Act* – the Scottish amateur premiere performance of the show made famous by Whoopi Goldberg.

✘ The first snippet – the arrival of Miss Van Cartier at St Katherine's Convent – was well played between Deloris (Niloo-Far Khan – who has this brash yet resourceful character down to a 'T') and Mother Superior (a suitably affronted Dorothy Johnstone), and although the choir did on occasion slightly drown out the leads, this will undoubtedly

be ironed out before the show opens. *Saviour Sisters* followed, with some excellent and witty solos from various nuns, and an especially impressive contribution from Monsignor O'Hara (played for the preview by Andrew Hilson, though Iain Fraser will take the part in the production itself). The performance ended with the Finale which was both exuberant and exciting. The Bohemians have been away from King's for five years; with *Sister Act* they will surely be making a triumphant return this February.



The Southern Light Opera Company and The Bohemians were once bitter rivals; any performer wishing to act for both had to have very special permission. Those days are of course long gone, and this year the Southern Light will be bringing its production of *Oliver* to King's in March, with a cast of over two hundred people.

The last time *Oliver* was staged at King's was in 2002, so there is a great demand to see it once again. This preview

began with the Artful Dodger and Oliver singing *Consider Yourself*. I always find it hard to avoid comparing any version of *Oliver* to Carol Reed's 1968 film, but in this case the two leads need have no worries – they both have outstanding voices and stage presence, their enunciation being crystal clear.

Alex Morrison's Oliver has the perfect cut glass tones of the boy from a very different place, and these contrast well with the cockney banter of Michael Denvir's Artful Dodger. In *I'd Do Anything* Nancy, ably played by Lori Flannigan, and the Dodger both performed well, again engaging the audience beautifully.

Fagin's costume was stunning with its oriental cap, long green coat and fur-trimmed sleeves; Charlie Munro cut a suitably ambiguous presence in the scene, full of jollity with the boys but with a clear threat of something rather less pleasant below the surface. The pathos of Oliver's solo *Where is Love?* again demonstrated this actor's clear young voice; Nancy's return to sing *As Long As He Needs Me* was equally successful, conveying her resigned devotion to Bill Sykes.



Image by Phil Wilkinson: www.philwilkinson.net



Gilbert and Sullivan are second only to Shakespeare in the number of times they are performed in the UK: it is said that there is always a performance of *The Mikado* on somewhere in the world.



This year The Edinburgh Gilbert and Sullivan Society is bringing *The Pirates of Penzance* to King's; although this production won't open until the end of March it's already highly polished, with a lively and well-rehearsed chorus and confident renditions of *Oh better far to live or die...I am a*

Pirate King from Scott Thomson and *I am the very model of a modern Major-General* from Ian Lawson. Mabel's *Poor Wandering One* was especially entertaining; Gillian Robertson has certainly mastered the art of the 'warble'.



Image by Phil Wilkinson: www.philwilkinson.net

The evening concluded with a fantastic set of numbers from Showcase 25. Showcase are a group of over 100 singers open to anyone over 16 who passes the audition – it must be a tough one, because all of the performers in this preview were outstanding.

Two solos from the first singer to take centre stage *Because I'm Happy* and *Get Lucky* were each full of energy and fun; this tenor has an electric stage presence and could have an audience up and dancing in no time. The mood swiftly changed as another performer came forward to sing *Stars*, Javert's song from *Les Miserables*; despite the sudden change of tempo, this singer's powerful bass voice gave a truly moving performance, bringing out all of the emotion in the lyrics.

A stunning conclusion to the evening was provided by the final soloist, singing *This is the moment, This is the time* – in an hour of excellent singing, this terrific voice still stood out as it filled the theatre with its strong, well-modulated tones. This wonderful singer was ably backed by a chorus that, perhaps inspired by their lead, also seemed to perform particularly well in this number.



Showcase was started in 1995 by John Wright and Bobby Harvey specifically to raise money for charity using the musical skills and talents of some of the best non-professional performers in the Edinburgh area. Since then they have donated almost a quarter of a million pounds to Macmillan Cancer Support, an average of £10,000 per year. This is the group's

first visit to the King's Theatre; they will be on stage on 29th and 30th May 2015.

So what are you waiting for? Contact Festival and King's Box Office on 0131 529 6000 to get your tickets for these great shows – or book online via the [theatre's website](#).